U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

## Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

**Round Goby Stomachs Processed**

Fishery Biologist Anjanette Bowen and Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill processed goby stomach samples in April. The fish were captured in November 2002 as part of an EPA GLNPO project. Alpena FRO staff examined the stomachs for the presence of lake trout eggs. The project was initiated to determine if round goby are having a negative impact on the rehabilitation of lake trout in the Great Lakes. The project was funded in 2002 and will continue through the 2003 field season with monthly trap sets between May and October. This project allows the Alpena FRO to help the Fisheries Program achieve its goal of preventing and reducing the establishment and spread of aquatic nuisance species. Staff at the Alpena FRO are attempting to determine the impact that round goby may be having on international efforts to rehabilitate lake trout in Lake Huron.

*Tracy D. Hill*

**Preliminary Survey of the Maumee River for Spawning Lake Sturgeon**

On April 9, 2003 Fishery Biologist James Boase joined forces with Biologists Chris Vandergoot and Larry Goedde from Ohio Department of Natural Resources - Division of Wildlife (ODOW) to conduct a preliminary survey of the Maumee River for lake sturgeon. The Maumee River is a tributary of western Lake Erie and sports Ohio's largest spawning run of walleye. For many years recreational fishers targeting walleye on the Maumee have occasionally caught lake sturgeon below Providence Dam. Preliminary genetic information collected form lake sturgeon captured by commercial fishers near the mouth of the Maumee River indicated that there may exist a distinct population of lake sturgeon in Western Lake Erie. The purpose of the preliminary survey was to locate potential spawning locations, assess effective sampling techniques for those locations, and determine how resources from the Service and ODOW can be pooled to efficiently monitor lake sturgeon in the Maumee River. Chris Vandergoot ha s submitted a grant through the Lake Erie Protection Fund. If the grant is accepted ODOW will begin working with the Service collecting lake sturgeon on the Maumee River during the 2004 lake sturgeon spawning run. This effort, if successful, would be a major step for the rehabilitation of lake sturgeon in western Lake Erie and initiate an excellent partnership effort between the Service and ODOW. This event provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with Ohio Department of Natural Resources - Division of Wildlife personnel and to explain the Service's mission and efforts to restore native fish in the Great Lakes. Specifically, the Service's efforts to rehabilitate lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes. Benefits of native species restoration were clearly defined and explained.

*James Boase*

**Lake Sturgeon Assessment in the Rifle River**

Biologists Adam Kowalski and Aaron Woldt and Assistant project leader Tracy Hill sampled the mouth of the Rifle River in Saginaw Bay, Lake Huron for the presence of adult lake sturgeon during the month of April. Set lines and gill nets were deployed in the bay in hopes of capturing mature lake sturgeon trying to enter the Rifle River on the spring spawning run. The project was jointly funded by Great Lakes Fisheries Trust and Service Cost Share Challenge Grant. Low water levels in Lake Huron made the sampling very difficult. Unfortunately, no lake sturgeon were captured. Several common carp and one channel catfish were captured in the gill nets. No by-catch was encountered with the set lines. While sampling in the Standish area, Alpena FRO staff used the opportunity to visit several of the commercial fishers participating in the Lake Huron Lake Sturgeon Status Survey. Adam Kowalski was introduced to William Lentz and his son Mark. Both Bill and Mark have been participating in the survey project since 1994. Work on this project allows the Fisheries Program to increase its support and assistance to state partners in stopping the declines of native fish. The Alpena FRO is working to identify declining native fish and determine what the greatest threats to these species are.

*Tracy D. Hill*

# Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

**The Field Season Begins for the Alpena Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program**

The month of April was busy for the Alpena Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Five surveys and fourteen site visits were completed in eleven counties of Alpena FRO's jurisdiction. Pending final funding, the Partners Program in northern Michigan has scheduled fifteen wetland restorations for construction, five road/stream crossing restorations, stream bank restorations in three watersheds, and one dam removal. Four wetland restoration sites constructed in 2002 were visited, and were filling with water. Due to a very dry year in 2002 most of the sites constructed in 2002 had very little water until the 2003 spring run-off. 32 acres of wetlands will be restored, 44 miles of river will be opened to fish passage, 15 miles of stream bank erosion sites will be restored, and 20 miles of river will have fish habitat improvements by the end of the 2003 field season due to efforts initiated by the Alpena Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Projects will primarily benefit coldwater fisheries in the headwaters of northern Michigan watersheds.

*Heather Enterline*

# Cooperation with Native Americans

**TFC Provides Final Harvest Limits for Lake Whitefish and Lake Trout**

On April 17, 2003 the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC) agreed on final lake trout harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters of Lakes Superior, Michigan and Huron. This action completed a primary role of the TFC and its Modeling Sub-Committee (MSC), the annual development of recommended safe harvest limits for State and Tribal lake whitefish and lake trout fisheries in these Great Lakes waters. Using the most current and statistically valid assessment and harvest data available, the MSC uses Statistical Catch at Age Modeling (SCAA) to produce recommended safe harvest limits for the upcoming

fishing season. The interagency TFC reviews the recommendations of the MSC and approves the numbers, then provides the recommended limits to the parties of the 2000 Consent Decree. Final recommended harvest limits for lake whitefish were provided to the Parties on March 21. Interagency participation in the Modeling Sub-Committee and the Technical Fisheries Committee ensures cooperation and agreement for establishment of safe harvest limits for lake whitefish and lake trout. The effort fulfills the Service trust responsibilities to the Great Lakes natural resources (lake trout rehabilitation effort) and to the 1836 Treaty Tribes.

*Jerry R. McClain*

**Service Biologist Attends Technical Fisheries Committee Meeting**

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO attended the April 17 meeting of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC). The primary focus of this meeting was to finalize 2003 harvest limits for lake trout in 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan, although other matters were discussed. As stipulated in the 2000 Consent Decree, final recommended lake trout harvest numbers must be calculated by the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC), approved by the TFC, and presented to the parties to the decree by April 30 each year. The 2000 Consent Decree is a 20 year fishery allocation agreement for 1836 Treaty waters signed by the State of Michigan, United States, Bay Mills Indian Community, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians.

As co-chair of the MSC, Woldt presented tables of lake trout harvest and effort limits for 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan to the TFC for review. Woldt also brought several needs of the MSC to the TFC for comment. These needs included the development of a list of standing charges from the TFC to the MSC, a proposal for developing an alternate year rotation for doing stock assessment/model runs for individual lake trout and lake whitefish stocks, removal of the commercial fishery underreporting vector from stock assessment models, and the potential impacts of increased Canadian lake trout harvest on Lake Huron lake trout harvest limits. Woldt also performed additional model analyses as requested by the TFC and kept meeting minutes for TFC chairman Jerry McClain who was unable to attend the meeting.

Harvest limits approved at this meeting, when reviewed by the parties and finalized, will become binding 2003 lake trout harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters. These harvest limits will allow lake trout fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the lake trout stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while providing recreational fishing opportunities and meeting the needs of tribal communities.

*Aaron P. Woldt*

# Partnerships and Accountability

**Service Biologist Conducts Stock Assessment Analysis for OMNR**

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO, at the request of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR), conducted catch at age simulations for lake trout stocks in northern Lake Huron. Woldt used statistical-catch-at-age (SCAA) models developed

by the Modeling Subcommittee of the Technical Fisheries Committee to assess the impact of the Ontario commercial fishery on lake trout stocks in northern Lake Huron. These SCAA models include reported harvest of Canadian licensed commercial fishermen and are used to annually set lake trout harvest limits for state of Michigan and tribal fishermen in 1836 Treaty waters under the 2000 Consent Decree. OMNR provided new estimates of commercial lake trout harvest in Canadian waters based on its commercial catch sampling program. This estimated harvest was significantly larger than reported harvest for 1999 to 2002 in some Canadian units. Woldt provided model output using 1) reported commercial catch and 2) estimated commercial catch to aid OMNR in evaluating its commercial fishing assessment and licensing program. Increased harvest in Canadian waters causes decreases in harvest limits in US waters for both Michigan and tribally licensed fishermen.

Future discussions between OMNR and the parties to the 2000 Consent Decree are expected regarding sustainable lake trout harvest levels and stock dynamics in northern Lake Huron. The 2000 Consent Decree is a 20 year fishery allocation agreement for 1836 Treaty waters signed by the State of Michigan, United States, Bay Mills Indian Community, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. Results from this analysis will be used by OMNR to assess its commercial reporting system for lake trout and the potential impacts of using reported or estimated commercial lake trout harvest. This result is consistent with the Service's goal of establishing and maintaining open, interactive communication with its partner agencies.

*Aaron P. Woldt*

# Public Use

**The Blue Water Anglers Learn About Lake Sturgeon Rehabilitation Efforts**

Fishery Biologist James Boase traveled to Point Edward, Ontario on April 9, 2003 to attend the Blue Water Anglers meeting. Boase gave a PowerPoint presentation titled "The Blue Water Bridge Lake Sturgeon". Approximately 120 recreational anglers from the Point Edward and Sarnia, Ontario area attended the presentation. The informal presentation allowed the audience to participate throughout the talk by asking questions and sharing their encounters with lake sturgeon while fishing in the area. Questions focused on how lake sturgeon habitat rehabilitation would enhance the abundance of other species, interaction with exotic species, potential for increased poaching as public awareness increases, and health risks associated with the consumption of lake sturgeon. The forum was an excellent opportunity for Boase to explain how the Alpena FRO is working with biologists, recreational anglers, and commercial fishers from both Canada and the US in efforts to better understand and enhance sturgeon populations throughout the Great lakes. Also, the meeting provided Boase an opportunity to interact with recreational anglers from Ontario and explain the vital role they play in the rehabilitation of lake sturgeon. This presentation provided an excellent opportunity to explain to the public the Service's mission and efforts to restore native fish and control exotic species. Specifically, the presentation focused on efforts to rehabilitate lake sturgeon populations in the Great Lakes and the role that the Fishery Resources Offices have in this endeavor. The benefits of native species restoration, and the detriments of exotic species were

clearly defined and explained. The presentation was also an excellent outreach opportunity.

*James Boase*

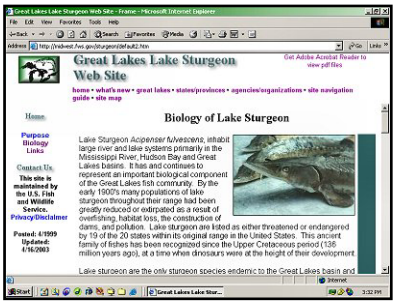
# Leadership in Science and Technology

**Internet and Lotus Notes Connection Upgraded at Alpena FRO**

Administrative Technician, Debra Turner, completed the upgrade to cable Internet connection during the month of April. This has increased the office efficiency and decreased tremendously the time spent waiting for file transfers both in and out of the office. The upgrade included a new 16 port switch which was needed as our previous hubs were out of connections. The upgrade has allowed all computers at the Alpena FRO to be current with software fixes and critical updates. This upgrade allows computer critical updates and security fixes to be downloaded on a timely basis and more efficiently.

*Debra Turner*

**A Fresh Look is Added to the Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Web Site**




The Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon web site (http://midwest.fws.gov/sturgeon) is a cooperative effort between state, provincial, and federal agencies and universities from the US and Canada to provide information to the public and other resource agencies on lake sturgeon activities in the Great Lakes. The site was first posted in 1999. A fresh look was added to the site in April to provide a cleaner platform for information exchange. Links to new reports were also added and contacts updated. The site is managed by Alpena FRO Fishery Biologist Anjanette Bowen. Check it out! Updates and new looks are important to maintaining the integrity of web sites. The Internet is one of the most valuable ways to provide information about lake sturgeon to the public and other stakeholders.

*Anjanette Bowen*

# Workforce Management

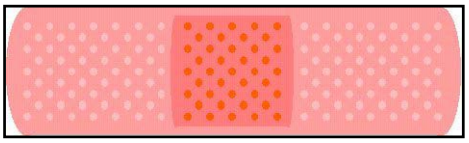
**Career Days at Thunder Bay Junior High**

The Thunder Bay Junior High School in Alpena, Michigan, held a career day on April 17. The event was held to showcase a diverse range of careers for the students. There were over 20 speakers from various careers including acting, firefighting, chefs, teaching, and natural resources. A room was set up for each presenter where a 20-minute presentation was given to the students. Four groups of 25 students rotated rooms throughout the morning. Biologist Wells attended this event representing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The presentation focused on the diverse career opportunities in the Service. This included biological, technical, clerical, and management positions. The focus of the Alpena Fisheries Resource Office was highlighted throughout the presentation. Many students were surprised to learn the USFWS had an office in Alpena and showed interest in the projects that are conducted from the office. Over 70 students attended the

presentation given by Wells, which concluded with many questions on how they may begin a career in natural resources. This accomplishment was an educational and outreach opportunity. We were able to showcase the USFWS and the Alpena FRO to the public and educate young students on the opportunities in the field of natural resources. Approximately 80 students attended the event including volunteers and staff.

*Susan E. Wells*

**CPR and First Aid Training held at Alpena FRO**



Bob Petersen of Jordan River NFH provided CPR and First Aid Safety Training for Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO) staff on April 1-2 at the Alpena office. Staff were also trained in the use of the new AED (Atrial Electrical Defibrilator). Seven Alpena FRO employees received training. CPR training is required annually and First Aid every 3 years for all USFWS employees. It keeps staff aware of potentially dangerous situations and empowers them to act in emergency situations. The training is timely with the field season beginning the end of the month. Safety training is required for all USFWS employees to provide protection for them and their co-workers. The CPR and First Aid training prepared staff for the start of the field season. It is especially important since we work in isolated areas.

*Anjanette Bowen*

**MOCC in Marquette**

On April 29-30 Fish and Wildlife Biologist Adam Kowalski was at the sea lamprey control office in Marquette, MI assisting with a Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC). Adam was recently certified as an MOCC instructor and was asked to help teach the course in Marquette. The course was held for the seasonal people at the Marquette Biological Station (7 students). The course consisted of 8 hrs of classroom instruction covering information such as Federal, State, and Local Policies, Boat Orientation, Required Equipment, Navigation Rules, Aids to Navigation, Marline Spike, Emergency Procedures, Fire Suppression and Visual Distress Signals, Towing, Anchoring, and Boat Handling. There was also eight hours of field exercise to demonstrate activities and allow the students a chance to perform the task before being tested. This is one of the several courses being conducted this by the Fish and Wildlife Service this year. This course will allow the Marquette Biological Station to operate at full capacity this field season. All field personal will be able to operate the vessels needed to carry out the objectives the of sea lamprey control program. Having all personnel trained to carry out all required duties is essential for the smooth operation of any field station.

*Adam Kowalski*

**Service Biologist Speaks at Career Pathway Night**

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO was invited to speak at the Natural and Agriscience Career Pathway Night sponsored by the Alpena/Montmorency/Alcona Educational Service District and Alpena Community College on March 20, 2003. Woldt gave a PowerPoint presentation to two groups of high school and college students, parents, and community members describing the field of marine biology and his professional duties as a Service Fishery Biologist. Concurrent sessions included

presentations by a Michigan conservation officer, forest fire officer, forester, geologist, horticulturist, meteorologist, surveyor, and veterinarian.

Woldt's presentation highlighted the educational requirements for professional marine biologists, necessary and recommended coursework, universities that offer marine science/fisheries training programs, employment opportunities inside and outside the Service, expected salaries, and potential duties of a Service Fishery Biologist. Students and parents asked questions about the field of marine biology and inquired about job shadowing opportunities. Overall, Career Pathway Night allows students and parents to learn about potential natural resource based careers from local professionals representing a wide range of agencies. Woldt's presentation explained the duties of a Service Fishery Biologist and the role the Service plays in fisheries conservation to interested students, parents, and community members. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of implementing educational and outreach activities to educate the public regarding Service activities.

*Aaron P. Woldt*

Accomplishment Archive